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Armenia, Republic of

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Report Highlights:

The development of Armenia's scientific capability and laws covering biotechnology are limited. Armenia has adopted the Cartagena protocol and some scientists would like to perform research in this field based on the protocol's parameters. In general, knowledge of biotechnology's benefits is low.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
SECTION II. Biotechnology Trade and Production	3
SECTION III. Biotechnology Policy	3
SECTION IV. Marketing Issues	3
SECTION V. Capacity Building and Outreach.....	3

Executive Summary

On the whole, Armenia has not yet embraced biotechnology, but some local agricultural scientists have expressed interest in developing and applying this production technology. Some farmers, small businesses, and exporters hold a contrasting point of view and would like to maintain the image of “ecologically clean” agriculture in Armenia so as to ensure its food product exports can enter into all international markets. A developing organic industry may also limit acceptance of GMOs. Armenia does not yet have laws governing biotechnology or sufficient testing and monitoring equipment to certify that products are free of GMOs.

SECTION II. Biotechnology Trade and Production

Research on biotechnology is not currently active in Armenia, though some science was reportedly being done more than 15 years ago. Since then, Armenia’s research system has not been adequately funded to do extensive studies on GMOs. Given the cost of research, commercial production of domestically developed products is not expected to take place in the near future.

The quantity of imported biotechnology products is not known for certain, because Armenia does not have testing laboratories with expertise in this area, and there are no laws governing biotechnology trade. Commentators note that some biotech events could be entering the country, but the quantity is expected to be very limited. Armenia imports only a small amount of food from the United States, including meat, some high-value processed products, and at times, grains.

SECTION III. Biotechnology Policy

Armenia does not have any laws directly related to biotechnology production and marketing, but does have a framework for implementing the Cartagena protocol for Living Modified Organisms (LMOs). The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Nature Protection were the lead entities in developing this framework, and received technical and financial assistance from international organizations. Armenia is taking a cautious approach to acceptance of LMOs, but one that should allow for entry, testing, and development of these products when monitored by an agency of the Armenian government. Field-testing of biotechnology events is not possible at this time, due to lack of a regulatory framework.

Organic agriculture is growing in popularity, and fits well into Armenia’s production system, and growth in this sector may place limits on biotechnology trade and development. Regarding consumption, some commentators have expressed support for labeling, but again there is no base law at this time that requires products with GMOs to be identified.

Armenia was the 41st country to adopt the Cartagena protocol.

SECTION IV. Marketing Issues

Marketing of biotech crops will be difficult on the local market, as general knowledge of this technology and its benefits for producers and consumers is limited—one analyst estimates that only five percent of the population understands the basic principles of biotechnology.

SECTION V. Capacity Building and Outreach

There are no outreach programs currently underway in Armenia.